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Articles in Today's Clips Wednesday, May 23, 2007

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Mom's boyfriend convicted in toddler's agonizing death

Of The Oakland Press

For the last three days of Jayvon Fuller's life, the little boy likely suffered from intense pain caused by an abdominal infection as he bounced from motel to motel in Southfield, according to testimony in the trial of his mother's boyfriend.

The boy didn't make it to a hospital until it was too late, and now his mother is in prison and her boyfriend awaits sentencing after being convicted Tuesday of involuntary manslaughter.

On April 1, 2006, just a couple of months shy of his third birthday, Jayvon died of acute peritonitis, which was caused by a nick in his bowel, leading to an infection that caused his abdomen to bloat.

On Tuesday, Gannon Deshon Mathis, 32, was convicted of involuntary manslaughter, second-degree child abuse and possession of marijuana. He faces up to 15 years in prison.

Though even his lawyer, Scott Kozak, admitted that Mathis did not make the most sympathetic defendant, jurors grappled with the difficult legal issue of who had a responsibility to get Jayvon the medical care that would have saved his life.

Jayvon's mother, 22-year-old Meshell Denise Fuller, already is serving a five-to-15-year prison term after pleading no contest to similar charges.

Kozak argued that Mathis had no duty to get the boy medical attention because the mother was there and she could have gotten help.

"This case is a tragedy," Kozak told the jury. "The temptation is to blame everybody involved."

But Assistant Oakland County Prosecutor Sara Pope-Starnes argued that both Mathis and Fuller had the obligation to get help.

Testimony showed Mathis had "whooped" the boy after he wet the bed, but there was not enough evidence to show an assault caused the internal injuries, so Mathis was not charged with murder.

The prosecutor, though, said Mathis was at least "grossly negligent" in not getting the boy to a hospital.

"A 2-year-old cannot help himself," Pope-Starnes told the jury. "He is helpless."

Deputy Medical Examiner Bernardino Pacris testified that a simple examination would have shown the problem, which he said "absolutely" was painful. He also said the boy had marijuana in his system, likely inhaled when the mother and Mathis smoked it.

Pope-Starnes said Mathis willfully neglected his legal duty to protect the boy, a duty born by other responsibilities Mathis took as Fuller took the son from his father's home for a visit.

First, Mathis paid for and registered the family into three motel rooms over the three weeks before Jayvon died, never listing the boy on the registrations.

Second, Mathis called a pharmacy and picked up some painkillers after the boy started showing medical problems.

Also, Mathis had paid for things for the boy in the past and he shared duties of changing pull-ups, bathing and feeding. He also had an employer relationship with the mother, who testified that she would leave Jayvon with Mathis while she worked as a prostitute.

"There's a phone right there in the room," Pope-Starnes said. "He took it upon himself to 'whoop' this child when he wet the bed. He watched the child get sicker and sicker after he struck him."

"He can't begin to care for this child and then abandon the care. He voluntarily assumed responsibility for this child and ignored it, and Jayvon Fuller is dead today because of that."

Mathis will be sentenced by Oakland County Circuit Judge Steven N. Andrews on June 5.

Contact Stephen Frye at (248) 745-4634 or steve.frye@oakpress.com.

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THE DAILY Reporter

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McCulloughs bound over to Circuit

[Print Page](#)

By Don Reid-Staff Writer

COLDWATER — After three hours of testimony, Branch County District Court Judge David Coyle bound over Jerry McCollough, 34, and his wife, Beth Ann, 33, on charges of maintaining a methamphetamine lab at their Brinks Road home on Jan. 11.

Prosecutor Kirk Kashian requested the additional charge of operating a lab in the presence of minors, after testimony said their five-year-old son was on the property.

Judge Coyle seemed reluctant to bind over the wife, a veteran Bronson High School math teacher, after hearing all the testimony until Kashian pointed out the law on the 20-year maximum felony reads that an owner of property can be guilty if they "should have known" about the operation of the lab.

Michigan State Police Trooper Mike McGuire said a task force of officers in January reviewed logs required of pharmacies to list purchasers of pseudoephedrine drugs. McGuire said the restricted sale was mandated by "the Patriot Act" in September 2006. Michigan joined 17 other states in passing the sales restriction and logging law.

Officers used log books from Branch, Calhoun, Hillsdale and St. Joseph counties, as well as those from nearby Indiana communities, to look for multiple purchases.

Three search warrants were obtained for homes of persons found to have purchased the drug multiple times, including the McColloughs.

Pushed by Jerry's attorney, J. R. Colbeck, and Beth's attorney, Ralph Kimble, McGuire said "multiple purchases" and "totality of circumstances" was the criteria for warrants. He cited "illegal amounts" in the affidavit for the warrant but when pressed, could not state the amounts purchased from October to January were illegal.

Trooper McGuire said two purchases in one day by Beth raised suspicions.

Officers could not answer why another person with more purchases in a shorter time was not targeted.

Curt Singer, a Child Protective Service worker called to the home the day of the search to take the three children into state custody, said Beth told him she did not use meth and did not know her husband used meth. She told him the drug purchases she made were for family use.

Officers from the task force, which includes various agencies, found unopened packages of the cold remedy at the home. Officers testified it is a main ingredient in making the illegal drug.

None of the officers could place the wife in possession of the lab materials seized or meth. Singer said Jerry told him he had used meth for 16 years and just a short time before officers arrived.

Found in a bedroom were a coffee filter with white chunky material on it believed to be meth. Because the Michigan State Police lab is backed up with testing, no results were available. In a locked box in the bedroom were coffee filters and baggies used for meth. A

bottle with a filter soaking out meth was seized. In a trailer on the property Jerry used for a workshop were filter materials, a grinder used to prep the cold medicine and a vent fan.

Police also discovered in the bedroom a video surveillance monitor with the camera on the drive. Officers also seized a bullet-proof kevlar vest and a SKS assault rifle.

Trooper Brandon Oaks, a former member of the SWET drug unit, said these items are often used by drug dealers and manufacturers. He also found folded aluminum foil, called a "boat," used to smoke meth, in the trailer.

At the scene was a Kirk Kashian for Probate Judge campaign poster with a red circle and a slash across it. It said "Beware of the enemy." A Meth Task force poster was below it. Also at the scene was a van. Inside was more meth materials and Nathan Hibbs, 32. He is charged in a separate case.

Bronson School Superintendent Bob Walters sat through the hearing. Beth has been suspended from her job and the state has indicated it will take action to revoke her teaching certificate.

The children were placed back in the home after she passed a drug test and weekly tests since then. Jerry was forced to leave Monday after he failed a test for meth before the preliminary examination.

Beth admitted to Singer she had smoked marijuana several times a week because of gall bladder trouble.

Both defense attorneys are expected to challenge the validity of the search warrants in Circuit Court following the June 15 arraignment.

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May 23, 12:55 PM EDT

Police: Man led them to mother accused of offering girl for sex

By DAVID AGUILAR
Associated Press Writer

HAMTRAMCK, Mich. (AP) -- A man arraigned Wednesday on a number of felonies led investigators to a woman they say offered her 7-year-old daughter for sex, police said.

Nicholas Alley, who appeared in Hamtramck District Court, is accused of using a computer to arrange sexual meetings with minors.

Wayne County sheriff's officials said they made contact in November 2005 with Alley, who believed he was chatting with a 14-year-old girl. Police acquired his computer records last year and read Internet chats including conversations with the 33-year-old Taylor woman.

She was arrested in March and is accused of offering her daughter to an undercover investigator for sex. The woman is jailed on a \$1 million bond. Her name is not being released to avoid identifying the child.

A not guilty plea was entered on Alley's behalf by a judge, and Alley requested a court-appointed lawyer.

Alley, 27, of Riverview, was ordered held on a \$150,000 bond with conditions of not using the Internet, having no contact with minors, and not leaving the state.

Other charges may be forthcoming, said police who seized two computers, child pornography and a Taser from his home.



Facility faces tough times

Wednesday, May 23, 2007

By Kristin Longley

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Last year, the Jackson County Medical Care Facility had to borrow three-quarters of a million dollars from its county-operated fund to make ends meet.

Now, the state's threatened cuts to Medicaid reimbursement have officials worried the facility will face another budget shortfall.

Gov. Jennifer Granholm is proposing a 6 percent cut to Medicaid if lawmakers don't reach a budget solution by June 1. A counterproposal from the GOP-controlled state Senate includes a 3 percent cut.

Either way, the county Medical Care Facility is in trouble -- 80 percent of its patients are insured by Medicaid. A 6 percent cut to reimbursement could lead to a \$500,000 annual loss.

"If they make these cuts, it will be tight," said John Steele, the facility's finance manager. "We're going to have to figure something out."

Steele said next May's bond payment especially could pose a problem.

The Medical Care Facility had to use \$750,000 of its "maintenance of effort" fund to make its semi-annual bond payment last May due to Medicaid cuts. The fund is generated by the facility but controlled by the county board of commissioners.

If the facility misses a payment -- which pays for its \$15.5 million building -- the county is held responsible, Chief Deputy Treasurer Karen Coffman said.

"But they have made all their payments with no problem," she said.

The cash was quickly paid back, but Steele said the facility doesn't want to have to borrow against the fund again. If cuts have to be made, the facility would scrutinize marketing and travel expenses and supplies.

Steele said staffing is the last thing they want to cut.

"We won't compromise resident care at all," he said. "We're not making any plans to cut right now and we're hopeful we won't have to."

"We believe they'll do the right thing up there in Lansing."

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This is a printer friendly version of an article from **The Detroit News**
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May 23, 2007

Granholt teams up with medical panel

Gov. appoints five to ex-lawmaker's group to assess health care needs in Metro Detroit area.

Sofia Kosmetatos / The Detroit News

Gov. Jennifer Granholm is getting involved with a Detroit Regional Chamber and Detroit Renaissance effort to assess the medical education and health care needs in southeast Michigan.

She has appointed five new members to a panel formed in April by the two business organizations and led by former U.S. Congressman and state Sen. Joe Schwarz. It was created amid concerns about Michigan State University locating a satellite osteopathic medical school facility on the Detroit Medical Center's campus and Oakland University starting a medical school with Beaumont Hospitals.

Continued sparring between Wayne State University and the DMC over terms of their medical residency contract negotiated last fall with the help of a state-appointed mediator also united business leaders, who worried about what the changes and atmosphere could mean for the training of doctors and delivery of health care in Detroit.

Granholm joined the efforts of the Schwarz-led panel rather than convene a group that she planned to form after the Wayne State-DMC contract negotiations concluded, said Liz Boyd, Granholm's spokeswoman.

"It's critical that the governor be involved," said Doug Rothwell, president of Detroit Renaissance. And having one panel instead of two brings all the stakeholders together in one place, he said.

The Granholm appointments are: Mark Gaffney, president of the Michigan State AFL-CIO; Janet Olszewski, director of the Michigan Department of Community Health; Vernice Anthony, president and CEO of the Greater Detroit Area Health Council; Dennis Toffolo, deputy county executive of Oakland County; and Robert Kelch, executive vice president for medical affairs for the University of Michigan.

Schwarz's group is expected to offer recommendations by Sept. 1.

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CRAIN'S DETROIT BUSINESS

Granholt names seven to health care panel

By Andrew Dietderich

4:45 pm, May 21, 2007

Gov. Jennifer Granholt added seven members to a panel formed to study medical education and indigent health care needs in Southeast Michigan.

Advertisement



Granholt announced the plan to form the panel with the Detroit Regional Chamber and Detroit Renaissance. The purpose is to develop an objective analysis of current and future trends and make sure future citizens' needs are met, according to a written statement.

The panel formed in April and is expected to offer recommendations by Sept. 1.

A series of recent announcements in the health care industry is the reason the panel is needed, Granholt said.

She cited the closure of **St. John Riverview**, plans for **Oakland University** and **William Beaumont Hospitals** to build a new medical school in Rochester Hills, and **Michigan State University's** selection of the **Detroit Medical Center** and **Macomb Community College** as satellite campuses for its college of osteopathic medicine.

The original panel consisted of 10 members.

Granholt's appointments are:

- Detroit Renaissance President Doug Rothwell.
- Detroit Regional Chamber President and CEO Richard Blouse Jr.
- Michigan State AFL-CIO President Mark Gaffney.
- Michigan Department of Community Health Director Janet Olszewski.
- Greater Detroit Area Health Council President Vernice Anthony.
- Oakland County Deputy County Executive Dennis Toffolo.
- University of Michigan Executive Vice President for Medical Affairs Robert Kelch.

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Ex-owner of adult foster care facility faces trial for abuse

LAPEER CITY

THE FLINT JOURNAL FIRST EDITION

Wednesday, May 23, 2007

By James L. Smith

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LAPEER - A former adult foster care facility operator will stand trial on charges that she abused a man in her care by slapping him and making him stand outside in the cold.

Linda Haney, 56, of Marathon Township faces a June arraignment in circuit court on misdemeanor charges of abusing a vulnerable adult in the third degree and a fourth-degree charge of causing physical harm to a vulnerable adult by improper care.

District Judge John T. Connolly ruled Monday that there was enough evidence to send the case on for trial after a preliminary exam. The third-degree charge if convicted carries a maximum 2-year prison sentence, and the second charge carries a maximum 1-year jail term.

Haney could not be reached for comment. Ramsey Mashni, Haney's attorney, previously asserted his client's innocence, but declined to comment further Tuesday.

A 58-year-old man testified Monday that he was left outside for an hour in the winter cold because he wet his pants. While outside, the man said, he fell and injured himself, noted assistant prosecutor Steve Beatty.

The man also testified he was slapped a number of times by Haney and punched once in the face with a closed fist.

The Lapeer County prosecutor's office said charges were filed after state police Trooper Steven Kramer was called to the adult care home Jan. 11 to investigate a complaint filed by Lapeer County Community Mental Health and the state Department of Human Services.

A DHS licensing consultant reported: "This resident showed indications of inadequate care, including very poor hygiene; strong body odor; unshaven face; long, dirty fingernails and disheveled, smelly clothing."

Haney no longer operates the Grand Haven Manor adult care facility, 6853 Klam Road, in Marathon Township. According to records obtained from the DHS, Haney closed Grand Haven Manor in April.

She also faces the loss of her child care center license at Imagination Island, 1665 N. Saginaw St., in Mayfield Township.

According to DHS records, an unannounced inspection found several violations at the child care center.

The DHS also cited the pending abuse case as a reason for revoking her license. In late April, the DHS sent Haney a letter advising her of the intent to revoke her child care license.

Haney has 30 days to file an appeal.

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Ablin given youthful trainee status

By: Thomas Marcetti

Posted: 5/23/07

An Isabella County judge accepted Muskegon freshman Eric Ablin's petition for the Holmes Youthful Trainee Act last week.

The act, better known as HYTA, allows the individual to be placed on probation without proceeding to an adjudication of guilt and a criminal conviction.

The court dismisses public records of the proceedings and charges at the end of the probation period, said Isabella County assistant prosecutor Roy Kranz.

"It means, in the future, if a potential employer asks them if they have been convicted of a crime, they can say no," Kranz said.

Juveniles who are granted youthful trainee status still have non-public records available only to the court and attorneys.

HYTA is available in Michigan to juveniles who are at least 17 years old and have not had their 21st birthday. Youthful trainee status may be terminated or revoked at any time at the discretion of the judge.

Ablin was charged with one count of possession of child sexually abusive material on Jan. 10.

Lerma sentenced

Trevor Lerma was given a "blended sentence" Friday for his role in the Sept. 24 stabbing of Nick Parmer and Dan Richardson.

The court found the prosecution had met the burden to sentence the 15-year-old as an adult, but will hold the sentence to allow him to be placed in juvenile rehabilitation.

Lerma will be placed on probation in the care of the Department of Human Services and will stay in a locked juvenile facility. Hearings will be held every six months to determine his progress in the program.

If the court decides Lerma is not succeeding in the program, he then will be sentenced as an adult and could face 29 to 54 months in prison with a maximum sentence of 10 years.

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Wailing, begging don't sway judge in torture case

Wednesday, May 23, 2007

By Barton Deiters

The Grand Rapids Press

GRAND RAPIDS -- Michigan's first conviction and sentencing on a new criminal charge of torture ended Tuesday not with a bang, but a whimper -- a lot of whimpering and some outright bawling -- all on the part of the convicted.

Lester Wakefield tried to fire his attorney, tried to file a motion to throw out the sentence before it was pronounced and claimed DNA evidence was destroyed by the victim in conspiracy with the state and his defense attorney. He then resorted to sob-choked begging to try to get Kent County Circuit Judge John Sullivan to spare him the sentence he eventually received.

The 44-year-old Greenville resident was sentenced to 27 to 50 years in prison on a charge of torture, stemming from two days in October when Wakefield held his 43-year-old girlfriend locked in an Oakfield Township trailer where he repeatedly struck her, threatened her and urinated on her.

A jury convicted Wakefield of the torture charge in March after three hours of deliberation. The woman testified she was beaten so badly she bled from her ears.

She finally was able to call 911 from a phone at another home.

The case led the Kent County Prosecutor's Office to test the state's 15-month-old torture law passed by a Legislature eager to fill what it saw as gaps in Michigan statutes. The new law has been criticized by some judges and attorneys as being vaguely written and unnecessary, since torture can be used to increase the sentence in existing crimes.

The jury found that Wakefield's actions, which he claimed were the result of a mutual domestic assault, equaled torture under the law. Wakefield could have faced as much as 75 years in prison.

Sullivan said Wakefield's crimes may not have fit what people think of when they hear the word "torture," but he believed the jury made the right call.

Sullivan noted Wakefield's criminal record, which includes numerous convictions, saying it played a part in the sentence determination.

Wakefield became distraught as the sentencing proceeded, wailing and begging the judge not to lock him up.

He was able to quiet himself long enough to fill out his papers requesting an appeal, but then started up again as he was led from the courtroom for the final time, calling out the victim's name.

"Oh God, I love you so much, you know this isn't true," he said.

Send e-mail to the author: bdeiters@grpress.com



Man takes deal, pleads guilty in slashings

LAPEER CITY

THE FLINT JOURNAL FIRST EDITION

Wednesday, May 23, 2007

By James L. Smith

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LAPEER - A Detroit man faces up to 10 years in prison after pleading guilty to two felonies in the November slashing of his 20-year-old Oregon Township girlfriend.

Edward Johnson, 21, entered the guilty plea in a deal with prosecutors. He was convicted of assault with intent to do great bodily harm less than murder and entering without breaking with intent to commit a felony. The assault charge carries a maximum 10-year sentence.

Sentencing is scheduled for June 25.

In his statement to Circuit Judge Nick O. Holowka, Johnson disputed preliminary exam testimony and said he used his keys and not a knife in the assault. He also admitted that he forced his way into the house from the porch after first saying he was invited inside.

The victim, who is also the mother of the couple's child, was slashed in the neck and the arm. She was hospitalized for several days at Hurley Medical Center requiring surgery for her wounds.

At first, Johnson tried to tell Holowka he had been invited into the house, but when assistant prosecutor Steve Beatty complained he was minimizing his actions, Johnson talked to his lawyer and told a different story.

Johnson slashed the woman after she refused to let him take the baby from the home, said Lapeer County Sheriff's Lt. Gary Parks.

The victim, who was living in her parents' home on Marathon Road, was home with her 18-year-old sister when Johnson arrived, pushed his way into the home and demanded the child and slashed the victim, Parks said.

When the victim's sister came downstairs, she saw Johnson standing over her sister and she punched him, causing him to leave the house, testimony showed.

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Prison time ordered for man in tractor assault on family

By MIKE FORNES

Tribune Staff Writer

WILMOT TOWNSHIP - A Cheboygan County man was sentenced Tuesday in 53rd Circuit Court in connection with charges that began when he threatened family members with a front-end loader.

Donald Dunham, 42, was sentenced to a term of three years to five years with the Michigan Department of Corrections by Judge Scott Pavlich. Dunham was charged in February with a third offense of operating while intoxicated - a five-year felony - and a misdemeanor charge of driving while license suspended, second offense, after a domestic violence incident.

Troopers from the Cheboygan Post of the Michigan State Police responded to an address on Dunham Road in Wilmot Township when a family member called 911 to report that Dunham had threatened to drive into the garage on his Yellow Cat 501 front-end loader while people were in the garage. The complaint stated that Dunham subsequently became involved in an altercation with family members, at one point using a chain in a threatening manner.

"He has a bad record, but Mr. Dunham has not used alcohol since the offense, despite the March 17 death of his mother," said Michael Ekdahl, Dunham's court-appointed attorney.

Cheboygan County Prosecutor Mickey Castagne recalled Dunham's criminal history in asking for a sentence of more than the 19-38 months recommended in the sentencing guidelines.

"Your honor, Mr. Dunham has eight felony charges on his record and more than a dozen misdemeanors, including several OUIL third charges," Castagne declared.

Following sentencing, Dunham was returned to custody to await transport to Jackson to begin serving his sentence.

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Article published May 23, 2007

Deadbeat dads show true colors by avoiding payments

To all deadbeat dads who refuse to pay their child support: What are you thinking? Do you think your ex is taking vacations and shopping with your child support check? Wrong!

Oh, she's shopping all right - for groceries, school clothes, summer clothes, winter coats and school supplies. Let's not forget the costs when your child wants to play sports - sign-up fees, cleats and padding or a mitt.

Some of you hide behind jobs that pay cash. There are a few who fabricate injuries to avoid paying child support. All the while, you're working for untraceable cash payments. Yes, you know you do because in your minds you think your money goes to your ex, not your children.

I'm one of the lucky ones. I now have a generous husband who enjoys helping to support my four children and provides for them as if they were his own - without regret.

Without him I would be working two, maybe three jobs and barely getting by. Who would be raising my children? So, if you think by not paying child support you'll show your ex-wife how smart you are, you're wrong. You're only showing your kids what a loser you really are.

TAMMI STEINERT

Clyde Township, May 21



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Published May 20, 2007

County promotes Family to Family Initiative

EATON COUNTY — With the budget crunch looming large in the State of Michigan communities around Eaton County are coming together to improve the lives of children and their families.

The Eaton County Building Community Partnership Committee has been meeting once a month at various locations around Eaton County to promote the Family to Family Initiative and to bring together community resource to help children.

The last meeting was held May 10 at the Trinity United Methodist Church in Delta Township. Trinity church members were encouraged to attend the BCP meeting to learn about ways to help local children and their families.

The Family to Family initiative is a Department of Human Services program designed to bring community members and families in need together. Children who are at the greatest risk are the ones who benefit from the resources and assets that communities possess. When citizens of Eaton County step forward and volunteer to help these children and their families it is a win-win for the community and the children.

The need of children in Eaton County is great. The number of children in the foster care system is approximately 92 with some 600 more children living with relatives. There has been a 34% increase in referrals of abuse and neglect since 1997. This has greatly impacted Eaton County's ability to service these children.

Foster care youth are as likely as their peers to complete school; however, they are more likely than their general population peers to complete their diploma through a GED.

Only 1.8 to 2.7 % of foster care youth will complete a bachelor's degree or higher. The rate for their counterparts is 27.5%.

The Eaton County Building Community Partnership committee is looking for organizations interested in sponsoring foster children between the ages of 14 and 18. The sponsorship would include seed money to be invested into a Certificate of Deposit at Dart Bank for the child, possibly provide tutoring, mentoring, helping with college applications and financial aid applications, help with buying college books or work clothes, sponsoring drivers education cost, collecting start up household supplies, i.e.. pots and pans, towels, and bedding for the child aging out of the foster care system. The BCP is also looking for persons interested in writing grants to help with sponsorships.

There are many ways to help children and families in your community. There is an urgent need for volunteers to transport children and or their families to doctor appointments, counseling appointments, supervised visit, and to supervise visits between children and their biological family members.

Currently there is a shortage of foster care homes in Eaton County that will take sibling groups and special needs children. If you are interested in helping out in any of these areas please contact: Keith Behm at (517) 543-4419

Volunteers are needed to advocate and speak up for children in court through the Barry/Eaton CASA program (contact Kimberly Cena at 543-3974), to help children and their families who are victims of domestic violence through the Eaton Siren Shelter (contact Nancy Oliver at 543-0748), and to mentor children aging out of the foster care system through sponsorship (contact Kimberly Cena at 543-3974).

All Eaton County citizens are welcome to attend the monthly Building Community Partnership meetings. Meetings are held on the second Thursday of each month at noon. The next BCP meeting will be held at St. David's Episcopal Church on Elmwood between Willow Street and West Saginaw Highway. Please RSVP Kimberly Cena at (517) 543-3974.

— *From CASA For Kids, Inc.*

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State Employer Sends Out Layoff Notices

MIRS, May 22, 2007

The Office of the State Employer today sent layoff notices to all unions representing state employees warning them that the state could start laying off union employees as early as June 22.

The State Employer is required to give the unions a 30-day notice before any union layoffs go into effect. The letter does not mean that union employees are going to be laid off, said Liz **BOYD**, press secretary for Gov. Jennifer **GRANHOLM**.

The notice referred to both temporary and permanent layoffs that will occur if the state budget crisis is not resolved, Boyd said.

"The notice does not mean that layoffs are definite or that they are imminent, but because there is no final budget resolution at this moment, there is no additional information to be provided about whether layoffs have to occur or if contingency plans will have to be implemented," she said.

Budget cuts and the programs that get chopped will have an effect on the future of layoffs.

"The Governor is working with the Legislature to resolve the crisis," Boyd said. "She is taking the appropriate measures in the event that we don't reach a comprehensive solution to the budget crisis."

Nick **CIARAMITARO** with the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees (AFSCME) said his group wasn't surprised that the letter went out and they'll keep pushing the Legislature to fix the budget problem.

"We kind of knew this was coming and we're very disturbed and disappointed," Ciaramitaro said.

Ciaramitaro said he's not sure how many state employees could be affected by the layoffs, but he represents 3,500 state employees, most of whom are a part of essential services.

"We're fearful the number will be huge," he said.

Ciaramitaro said his group will continuing pushing the Legislature to raise revenues so these employees can keep their jobs and essential services can be delivered to state residents.

"People will suffer and they will suffer badly if the Legislature doesn't come to grips with

the fact that they haven't raised enough revenue from the state this year," Ciaramitaro said. "They have to do their job and they have to do it now."



House tackles bills taxing pensions, limiting benefits of public employees

May 22, 2007

By CHRIS CHRISTOFF

FREE PRESS LANSING BUREAU

The state House began taking action Tuesday on a series of bills that would limit public employee health and retirement benefits, tax their pensions, limit school superintendent salaries and restrict school board elections to November.

The bills are politically linked to Democrats' efforts to gain Republican votes for a tax increase to balance the state budget. Republican leaders have said they won't consider a tax hike without agreements to reduce the cost of public employees, including teachers.

Granholtz has insisted on a tax increase to go along with budget cuts and government reforms.

The House Committee on Oversight and Investigations approved three bills that would make public employee pensions subject to the state income tax – they are now exempt – and prohibit retired state workers from collecting both pension benefits and a salary if they go back to work for the state.

Other bills in the committee to limit public employee benefits were discussed but no action was taken Tuesday afternoon, although they are expected to be acted upon this week.

The House Education Committee sent to the full House four bills. One would cap school superintendents and other school employees salaries to no higher than the governor's salary, which is now \$177,000 a year.

Also, school board elections would be held only in November, rather than May. Another bill would encourage school districts to pursue cost-savings measures, such as shared services.

Rep. Lorence Wenke, R-Richland, a lead sponsor on the oversight committee bills, said he was not optimistic that an overall agreement on a tax increase and government reforms could be reached this week, or by June 1, the day state cuts to school districts and Medicaid payments to hospitals and physicians are to take effect because of the budget crisis.

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State spending at values crossroad

Monday, May 21, 2007

By Sharon Emery

Lansing Bureau

LANSING -- As the state's budget crisis becomes more personal, bearing down on individuals who rely on mammoth spending programs such as Medicaid, some are wondering whether Michigan taxpayers will save them.

Speaking from her wheelchair at a news conference Monday, Jacqui Day said she receives Medicaid-funded personal care, which enables her to stay in her Lansing home rather than in a nursing facility.

But with lawmakers and the governor desperate to plug a \$800 million hole in the current-year budget, Day fears spending cuts to programs that she hopes taxpayers value -- including her ability to live independently.

"Will those of us who are most vulnerable be dispensable?" she asked.

Representatives from medical, education, municipal, labor and social services groups said that after years of cuts and restructuring, it's time to raise taxes. They are part of the Michigan Fiscal Responsibility Project.

"If there ever was a defining moment for the future of this state, this is it," said Don Gilmer, Kalamazoo County administrator and former state budget director under Gov. John Engler.

"Taxes are the price you pay for a civilized society," Gilmer said. "In Michigan today it's more challenging to be civilized ... than it ever has been."

Republican lawmakers and Democratic Gov. Jennifer Granholm are at a standoff on the budget because the governor insists that new revenue is needed to address shortfalls in both 2007 and 2008. Republicans are just as adamant that at least for this year, the budget can be balanced through a menu of spending cuts, funding shifts and accounting moves.

But the cost of cuts on patients has doctors like Dr. Raouf Seifeldin, of the North Oakland Medical Centers in Pontiac, worried. He cited threats to health and even life in the wake of proposed Medicaid cuts.

The state's Medicaid program "depends on the charity of the medical community, but there's a limit to what they can do," Seifeldin said. Currently Medicaid pays only 60 cents of every \$1 in services provided, he said.

Al McGeehan, mayor of Holland and president of the Michigan Association of Mayors, said, "We need to recognize that there is a minimum level of services that we need to provide to make sure our communities remain unique and vibrant."

After years of tax cuts "created around an economy that no longer exists, we need a tax structure that reflects our current needs," McGeehan said.

The proposed \$116 prorated cut to per-pupil funding yet this school year will double the number of public schools in deficit spending, said Sharon Banks, superintendent of Lansing Public Schools.

"People are scared to death," she said.

"The Legislature must keep its promises. I am being held accountable (for student performance) and I expect some (accountability) in return," Banks said.

Sharon Parks, of the Michigan League for Human Services, said after the news conference that public

polling indicates taxpayers are willing to pay for certain essential services. But she fears they won't speak up until the cuts are made.

Gilmer echoed the dilemma.

"We've seen tough times before ... but we were able to collectively work our way out of it," Gilmer said, noting the 1993 bipartisan agreement on school finance reform.

But in his 33 years, he said he's never "seen the inability to find a solution this bad."

In the face of "profound impacts on critical infrastructure," including health, education and social services, he said citizens have to start pressing for solutions they can live with.

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